

# My Mind is Sharp

If I had to describe my way of thinking, in one word, it would be *sharp*. In my childhood, that sharpness was all in the sense of intelligence. To be described as ‘sharp’ was synonymous with being ‘clever’ or ‘quick’ or ‘bright’. No one would have mistaken me for *edged*. I was horrendous at talking back to bullies, I was naive and obedient and cheerful and soft in most senses of the word.

Analysis literally means breaking apart, and I was so very good at carving nature at the joints. I could lay out a book or a text like a biologist presenting a dissected body, all its pieces neatly sorted. I could pierce right through to the point of a story. I loved it. I delighted in drawing lines and slicing along them. This continued through my life and remains true today. I still get praise from teachers, supervisors and coworkers for the needle-sharpness of my thoughts, and the way I can cut right to the heart of the matter.

For a long time, the edges of my way of thinking mostly only cut back at me, so I didn’t notice them as such. In hindsight, I can see the way the rigid standards I held myself to hurt me. The way I danced carefully- checking and double-checking, seeking approval and permission- to avoid the metaphorical bleeding edge of my own logic. When I first had words to describe my worries and anxieties, they were claws, slashing at me.

The first glimpse I got at how my sharpness could accidentally hurt others was fairly late, as a young adult. A college friend (and current partner) would recommend books or shows she enjoyed. And in my reflections back to her, I did what I liked best- break apart, analyze, cut open and inspect. And this left her with the impression that I hated what she loved. This happened for three main reasons:

- If I was invested, I didn’t want to pause in order to send a message, so I’d only write when I finished (in part or a chapter/episode) or when something cracked my suspension in the story.

- Often when I started a statement with “It would have been cool if...” I meant that quite literally and directly. Not that what did happen wasn’t fun, but that I would have enjoyed some additional or alternative option.
- I was, in my own mind, thinking that the good parts were obvious and didn’t need to be said. In short, if I read a 400 page book and my only comment was “It felt a little rushed that Character X kissed Character Y”, it means I liked the 399 other pages of the book. This is not, in fact, obvious to most people.

I’ve also felt bitterness toward the edge of my own mind. When reading the Elemental Logic series by Laurie J. Marks, I felt very seen by the Truthken and Air Logic. They, too, had no patience for wrapping a truth in layers of falsehoods, and were focused and direct. They were also hated. Not only by others in the books, but it seemed by the author herself, who portrayed Air Logic as uniquely difficult for others to tolerate, and uniquely in need of being controlled or contained, to the point of death. It was galling to be so accurately seen and yet so soundly rejected. When I explored tarot, I could not deny my affinity for the suit of swords, the element of air representing thought and intellect. But while all the other suits had a mix of bad and good meanings, the suit of swords seemed far more markedly pessimistic. The Ten of Cups is an abundance of emotion- family, love, harmony, domestic bliss. Apparently what an abundance of mind and intellect brought- the Ten of Swords- was painful endings, loss and crisis. I do not take tarot very literally, but it spoke to a common mindset. It seemed like the world was telling me I was a blade- a good blade, a strong blade, but one that could only ever be a weapon, and cut others.

I have, in the time since, learned to accept this aspect of myself. My mind, my decision-making process, my thoughts- these are a sword. It is a sword I can wield in service of others. It is a sword I can put to the work of kindness and charity and shelter and love. But it is still a sword; it will always have an

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edge. Allowing that edge to dull or rust does not help me, or spare others, it only causes unnecessary pain. Keeping it sharp means it can sparkle and gleam and do its work well. But it means I will always have to be mindful of its edge, and watch how I wield it.